

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

Dear Customer,

I hope this letter finds you well - up until reading this letter at least - and enjoying this mild late-September. We have lovely purple cauliflowers in the bags this week from Fadmoor on The Yorkshire Moors and their red Desiree potatoes. We have Worcester Pearmain apples and Conference pears from orchards in Kent, and parsnips and leeks from Ormskirk. The Conference pears will arrive hard but will ripen in due course in your fruit bowl. We have Red Globe grapes from Sicily and Purple French figs from the Drome region of France in some of the fruit bags. Here are a few delicious recipes you could try:

**Roasted Purple Cauliflower**

*purple cauliflower, cut in florets*  
*1 tsp minced garlic*  
*1 tsp ground mixed herbs*

*3 tbsp lemon juice*  
*½ tsp salt*  
*2 tsp olive oil*

*Preheat the oven to 400F. Put the lemon juice, garlic and ground herbs into a mixing bowl. Stir in the olive oil, add the florets and toss to coat. Arrange in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes.*

**Moroccan Spiced Cauliflower and Almond Soup**

*1 cauliflower*  
*½ tsp coriander*  
*1 tbsp harissa paste, plus extra drizzle*  
*50g toasted flaked almonds, plus extra to serve*

*½ tsp ground cinnamon*  
*½ tsp cumin*  
*1 litre hot vegetable stock*

*Cut the cauliflower into small florets. Fry the olive oil, spices and harissa paste for 2 minutes in a large pan. Add the cauliflower, stock and almonds. Cover and cook for 20 minutes until the cauliflower is tender. Blend soup until smooth, then serve with an extra drizzle of harissa and a sprinkle of toasted almonds.*

**Potato and Parsnip Gratin**

*700g potatoes, peeled, cut crossways into 2mm thick slices*  
*450g parsnips, peeled, cut crossways into 2mm thick slices*  
*1 large onion, halved and thinly sliced*  
*25g butter, finely chopped*

*500ml stock*  
*250ml milk*  
*2 tbs chopped rosemary*

*Preheat oven to 190C. Grease a 2-litre capacity ovenproof dish. Place the potato, parsnip, onion and rosemary in a large bowl, toss and combine. Season with salt and pepper. Spread the potato mixture over the base of the prepared dish. Pour over the stock and milk. Top with the butter. Bake in the oven for 1 hour or until golden and the vegetables are tender when tested with a skewer. Set aside for 5 minutes to stand. Serve*

I shouldn't be writing a newsletter on a day like today. At best I will bore you, at worst, depress you. But alas, when it's newsletter day, it's newsletter day.

Another autumn, another year of the Holy Trinity - XF, Strictly and Downton - a year older.....another one. The bones in my feet hurt after a long walk with Myfa on Saturday. Well actually they ache even when I don't. I have not had a good weekend. I have a slow migraine. It was brought about, I think, by some people from whom I have in the past bought/rescued lambs and ageing ewes, suggesting I meet them for lunch at the Sheep Fair in Masham on Saturday. They had come up from Stoke on Trent - a coach-load of them. I wanted to see them to make arrangements for me taking the 12 baby Wensleydale male lambs they were imminently sending to slaughter, but was frightened of what happened at the Fair. I googled and found there were Breed classes and one of the classes was for 'Fat Lambs' to be judged probably by prodding butchers. I knew that if I went I would have to buy and rescue all the fat lambs. In the end I decided I couldn't go. Instead I went for a walk, it was a beautiful walk up in Swaledale following footpaths through fields bordering streams and rivers. The landscape was breathtaking in the autumn light. But in these fields were lambs, fat lambs. They stood in little groups watching me inquisitively. They were beautiful and innocent - 'ground clouds' as someone on facebook called them. I took some photos of them. This was a big mistake. I felt heartbroken - they probably have just days left, a week or two at most. I seem to find it harder to bear, the older I get.

I came home to an email from a friend who leaves her corporate desk and heads to Dover when there is a live export sailing. They are all very worried, as on the 15<sup>th</sup> October it is the Eid al Hala Festival, and last year they attempted to ship 77,000 sheep and lambs out during this period - most would have been ritually slaughtered. But thankfully they had problems at Ramsgate which is where they were sailing from at the time. This year at Dover there are no such problems. They are probably being bought up from livestock markets around the country as I write this and being amassed somewhere in readiness. Hard to shake a migraine with such thoughts burning in one's head.

My friend wrote to and emailed her MP many times on the subject of live exports and only ever gained a stock response. She decided to have an appointment with him at his surgery. Her MP is now so upset himself that he has organised a meeting with Compassion in World Farming. I think it is really the most effective thing we can do. I called William Hague's office and despite having just seen him on TV with Merkel and Barack Obama, I was asked if I wanted to see him just 2 days later on the Friday. Ironically, I was the one who couldn't make it. But I am seeing him this month once he's got the party conference out the way. Imagine if we all did this - went to our MP's surgeries and put them on the spot, tell them what happens, tell them it makes our lives a living hell that this goes on. I'm sure we would have it banned in no time - especially if we made it clear what a vote winner it would be. If you don't feel up to the job of discussing the finer detail - just get in there and sit and cry and beg them to stop it. If you are interested in seeing your MP, my friend would be very happy to email you an easy fact sheet so you can get up on it. They just have to change some Harbours Act, which would allow the ports to decline the trade which they currently aren't allowed to do.

Just google for the telephone number of your MP's office. Do email me if you want me to put you in touch with my friend. If you do go and see him/her, let me know and let me know what they said so we can share, and I will honour you with a free string of organic garlic from Provence weighing a minimum of 900g !

I'm very sorry that this isn't a very cheerful lot and will do better next week !

Miserably yours,

Isobel